

applying the rubbed Tube to one End of the Wood, the other attracted Leaf-brass, or a Thread hanging down from a Stick. Then, instead of the glass Plates, I laid the long Piece of Wood on Two Cakes of Rosin, and applied the rubbed Tube to the End of the said Wood, which conducted the Electricity to the other End, where Leaf-brass and the Thread were attracted in the same Manner.

This shews that, in order to conduct Electricity along any non-electric Body, it is indifferent what Kind of Electricity its Supporters are endowed with, provided they are electric.

XXII. *A Letter from John Huxham, M. D. F. R. S. to C. Mortimer, M. D. Secr. R. S. concerning an Extraordinary Hernia Inguinalis; and an Observation of the Passage of Mercury over the Sun, Oct. 31. 1738.*

Honoured S I R,

AS the frequent Dissection of morbid Bodies tends greatly to ascertain the Diagnostic and Prognostic of Diseases, during my Studies, and for the first Six or Eight Years of my Practice, I applied myself to it with great Assiduity.—Some few of the more remarkable Cases, I have met with, I beg Leave to send you from time to time; and, if any of them appear to you worthy of that Honour, you may lay them before the ROYAL SOCIETY.—The following
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may be of some Use in Practice : Therefore I send it first.

Mr. *Burman*, a Taylor of this Town, about 40, had from his Childhood laboured under a small inguinal Rupture on the Right Side; but about Six Years before his Death, from a Blow received in his Groin, the *Hernia* became very large, and the Gut always remained down in the *Scrotum*; for he wore no Bag, Truss, or the like, to support it.—The Day before his Death, he was following his Work, as usual, with his Pressing-iron, without any violent Jerk, or Straining; but, about 10 in the Morning, all at once, he felt a very great Pain in his Right *Inguen*; which, continually increasing, in Two or Three Hours threw him into Vomitings, cold Sweats, &c. —His Apothecary, Mr. *Ellery*, gave him a Clyster, which brought off a small matter of thin Stool; but gave no Relief, though it had been formerly very serviceable to him in the like Disorder.—About Eight in the Evening I was sent for, and found him in cold Sweats, with scarce any Pulse: The *hernial* Tumour was prodigious large, and exceeding hard; the Pains extremely violent, which caused excessive Languors.—I immediately ordered, that he should be placed in a proper Posture, that a warm aromatic emollient Fomentation should be frequently and long applied, and that a Reduction of the Intestine should be attempted; or, if that did not succeed, that the Operation for the *Bubonocoele* should be performed.—The Fomentation was tried a long while, emollient *Terebinthinate* Clysters injected, and the Reduction attempted, for an Hour or Two, by Mr. *John Start*, a skilful Surgeon, but in vain: Nay, the Swelling

ling increased considerably during the Application; and the Pain became (if possible) more aggravated all over the *Hernia*, which before, was chiefly at, and near, the Rings of the *Abdominal* Muscles; and this too, though he took, with an easy Cordial, and mulled Wine, *Laudan. Solid. gr. ij 3iis Horis*.—Early the next Morning I was desired to see him again; and, finding that he had not slept a Moment, the Tumour considerably increased, and excessive hard, though not discoloured, and the Patient exceeding weak and pained, I advised the Operation forthwith, as the only possible Means of saving him: But he was unwilling to admit of it, and we were all indeed diffident of the Success.—Whilst a fresh Fomentation was getting ready, the poor Man expired in Agonies.—About an Hour or Two after, we opened the *Scrotum*, which in so short a Space of Time appeared all livid, and the Blood-vessels were extremely turgid and varicose.—Upon cutting through the Teguments, Part of the *Colon* and *Ilium* thrust out with great Force; they were both prodigiously distended with Wind, highly inflamed, and in several Places very livid.—That Part of the Guts commonly called *Cæcum*, was blown up into a kind of globular Figure, as big as a Child's Head.—It was remarkable, whether in the original Conformation, or by the vast Distention, I know not, that there was no manner of Appearance of the *Appendix vermiformis* to be found, though we diligently examined:—And further, that the *Cæcum* was vastly thicker set with Glands, and they much larger, than I had ever seen before in any Subject.—The Convulsions of the *Ilium* and *Colon* were so immensely distended with
Wind,

Wind, that the valvular Corrugations in both almost totally disappeared.—Yet exactly at the *Valvula Tulpii, alias Bauhini*, there was a very great Constriction of the intestinal Canal, as if tied strongly with a Cord; and, though we opened the *Colon* about a Hand's-breadth beyond the *Valve*, and let out the *Flatus*, we could not possibly press any Wind from the *Ilium* into the *Colon* through the *Valve*.—I suspected indurated Excrement, as an Obstacle; but, on a careful Inquiry, only found the whole valvular Production, and the End of the *Ilium*, at its Insertion into the *Colon*, highly inflamed, and quite shutting up the Passage.—On dilating the Rings of the oblique and transverse Muscles, the Wind rumbled up out of the *Ilium* into the Cavity of the Belly very readily.—We found pretty much bloody *Sanies* in the Guts, on slitting them open, but little or no indurated *Fæces*: A manifest Proof, that the exceeding Hardness of the Tumour was owing only to the excessive Flatulence, and great Inflammation; and shews how much we may be deceived in our Conjecture on like Occasions.—The Tumour of the *Scrotum* was 28 Inches round.—I was much surpris'd to find no Adhesion of the *Intestines* to the containing Parts, though he had so long laboured under the *Hernia*.

This unhappy Case gave me a severe Reflection, and I cannot but think the Malady was much increased by the repeated Application of the hot Fomentations; as it rarefied the Air greatly, and, by relaxing the Parts, gave further Room to the vast Expansion.—At that time I had never seen *Belloste's* Second Part to his *Hospital-Surgeon*, where he advises, in

such Cases, the most cold astringent Fomentations. —In this and the like, they might have been very proper; especially if a Portion of Spirit of Wine camphorated had been added to prevent Mortification.

It sometimes happens, that though the annular Perforations of the abdominal Muscles are dilated by the Operation, yet the *Hernia* cannot be reduced. — I believe, as the Guts were distended to so enormous a Bulk in this Man, it would have been impracticable. In such Cases may it not be proper to prick them with a Needle, to let out the *Flatus*, as is commonly practised in small Wounds of the *Abdomen*, where the *Intestine* thrusts out, and becomes so turgid with Wind, that it cannot otherwise be returned? — In some ventral Ruptures (as they are called) this also may be necessary. — I find Mr. *Sharp*, in his late excellent Piece of Surgery, approves of this Method, from an old *English* Practitioner, who had often used it with Success. — I am persuaded, Punctures in this Manner are much less dangerous than the Operation; and believe, in such Cases, may be more effectual. — It is a common thing with Grassiers and Cattle-Doctors, to prick the Guts of their Sheep and Bullocks with great Success, when, by feeding on Clover, or fresh young Grass, their Guts become so vastly distended with Wind, as would otherwise certainly kill them. — May not a very small hollow Needle with Perforations, as in that used by some instead of the *Trocar* for a *Paracentesis*, be more proper than a common Needle? — May not the hernial Tumour be perceived to be chiefly flatulent by its being in
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some Degree transparent upon applying a Candle, as used in the *Hydrocele*? And may not that direct the proper Place for Punctures?

These are Conjectures; but I am, with great Truth, and the highest Respect,

S I R,

Your most obliged,

Plymouth, June 8. 1739.

and most obedient,

humble Servant,

J. Huxham.

I have taken the Liberty to fill up this Letter with a Scheme of the Phase of the Sun, *October* 31st, 11h. 5'. 12''. as taken by my Telescope, which is a very good one of 10 Feet; but as I had neither Cross-Hairs, Micrometer, or other exact Instruments, the Observation may not be very exact: Besides, I had only a Glimpse of the Sun for 7 or 8 Minutes.

